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SUBJECT: GOK MOVES FORWARD ON NEW LABOR LAW & ON RELIEF FOR
LAID-OFF KUWAITIS

Private sector labor bill one step closer to passing

¶1. (SBU) At an unprecedented 19 August emergency session of Kuwait's National Assembly, MPs gave the first of two approval votes needed to pass the new private sector labor bill. The bill would increase foreign workers' annual leave from fourteen days to thirty and increase the amount of time required for notices of termination from one month to three. However, it would also reinstate a 2007 Kuwaiti law which bars women from working in "hazardous jobs" or at any job between 8pm and 7am. For this first of two required approval votes, 49 MPs voted in favor of the bill, four voted against, and seven abstained. Three of the four female MPs abstained. Most of the "no" votes were by liberal MPs opposed to the curfew for women. The bill will come up for a second, final approval vote shortly after the parliament reconvenes in late October.

Laid-off Kuwaitis to get GOK relief money?

¶2. (SBU) The MPs also considered a bill to provide monetary relief for laid-off Kuwaitis in the private sector. This discussion largely focused on bashing foreign workers for taking Kuwaiti jobs and on what qualifications Kuwaitis should meet to merit GOK compensation. At the emergency session, attended by PolOff, Islamist tribal MP Ali Al-Dokbasi spoke at length on the "thousands of non-Kuwaitis working in GOK ministries at a time when many Kuwaitis have no work and are looking for jobs." Dokbasi also lamented that more than half of the oil sector workers are non-Kuwaitis. As it currently stands, the bill dictates that for all Kuwaiti workers who have been laid off after working at the same job for three concurrent years, the GOK will pay their salary for a year (this applies to about a thousand Kuwaitis total). (Note: This bill only applies to the private sector and about 95% of the Kuwaiti work force is in the public sector, which makes up about two-thirds of Kuwait's GDP. Article 41 of Kuwait's constitution states that "Every Kuwaiti has the right to work," and as a result, the GOK is the employer of last resort for Kuwaiti citizens. End note.)

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